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OUR OWN IRON CURTAIN

By Felix Morley

A Russian radio commentator last week protested Prime Minister Attlee's assertion that a "wall of ignorance and suspicion" separates Russia from the western world. The Moscow Government, said Mr. Mikhail Mikhailov over the air waves, has "very good understanding of the state of affairs abroad." On the question of how much understanding other governments have of conditions in Russia, Mr. Mikhailov was silent.

Although he did not tell the whole truth, there was a very important moral for the American people in that part of the Mikhailov observations which cannot be disputed. The iron curtain is not the rigid, impermeable barrier which the picturesque phrase suggests. A better comparison would be with that glass known as "One Way Vision," enabling the insider to look out while the outsider cannot look in.

Through its efficiently staffed Embassies; its multitude of well-organized Consulates; its host of unofficial agents operating in other countries -- the Soviet Government indeed possesses much information, though not necessarily "understanding," in regard to external affairs. To appreciate how complete this information is, and the devices whereby it is collected, one may consult the recent report of the Canadian Royal Commission, on the atomic bomb espionage in that country.

From the evidence before it this official inquiry concluded that the Communist International was never dissolved, as announced in Moscow in 1943. "Only the name was liquidated, with the object of reassuring public opinion in the democratic countries." Comintern agents continue active in labor unions, colleges, publishing houses and other key positions, including government offices, where information can be collected, and policy directed, in the Russian interest.

Because it gives the impression that the Soviet Government knows little about the western world, the popularity of the "iron curtain" phrase, coined by Winston Churchill, is unfortunate. It is true that we hear little except what the Kremlin wants us to hear about Russia. But it is not true that the Kremlin is ill-informed about conditions in the democratic nations.

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Russia, however, is not unique in building one-way streets, carrying the traffic of information into government offices and carefully controlling any return flow of vital knowledge from the government to the people. This is a necessary practice of any paternalistic or socialistic State. The Soviet Government, being completely socialistic, has merely carried the art of getting without giving to its logical extreme.

Under the protracted administration of Franklin D. Roosevelt the United States also moved a long way toward the totalitarian ideal of a government which strips all privacy from its people, divulging in return only what official propagandists think the public should be permitted to know. In accepting his first Presidential nomination, at Chicago on July 2, 1932, Mr. Roosevelt said: "Let it be from now on the task of our Party to break foolish traditions." One of the traditions which he thereafter consistently proceeded to shatter was that which held it the duty of the American Government to be honest and forthright with its citizens. Colorful propaganda replaced colorless information.

When the Federal bureaucracy was small, and its functions limited, the average American either knew what was the policy of his government in any particular field, domestic or foreign, or he was able to find out. Government publications were nothing like as numerous as is the case today, but they were more reliable and more accurate. So far as they went, real faith could be given to official statistics.

In bygone days administrative officers did not consider it their function to try to "sell" a political policy by broadcasting selective evidence or by outright scaremongering. An instance of the former technique, as currently practiced, was the effort of the Department of State, last March, to stimulate bad relations between the United States and Spain. An illustration of scaremongering is the prediction of "joy-ride to disaster" broadcast by OPA officials in the pre-election effort to perpetuate their jobs along with the tenure of that unlamented agency.

The blame cannot be attached to any one individual. But there is no question that the technique of government by misrepresentation gained unprecedented strength as a part of the ministrations of the New Deal. And it is this technique which has destroyed the validity of the fine tribute paid this country by James Bryce 60 years ago, when he wrote in The American Commonwealth:

> "It is not so much by or through the machinery of government as by their own practical good sense, which at last finds a solution the politicians may have failed to find, that the American people advance."

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On November 5, in their first peacetime election since 1938, the American people rendered verdict on the New Deal theory of government. The social value of its accomplishments was not denied. But the price that has been paid in the smashing of "foolish traditions" was analyzed by the voters and found too high. A Republican Congress, supported by many Democrats who revolted from New Deal practices, now has the mandate to restore as much as possible of the heritage so gaily destroyed.

The first and most important task will be to lift our own iron curtain, which long since descended to cut the public off from information on what their own government is doing, and why. One reason for sympathy with the Russians is that we, quite as much as they, are ignorant of the factors deciding governmental policies. Indeed, in one respect the average Russian subject knows more than the average American citizen about the aims and objectives of their respective governments. Ivan Ivanovitch at least understands that his dictatorship plans to extend State Socialism at home and abroad, while John Q. Public has no such well-defined idea of what his government has been trying to accomplish.

The unmistakable and immediate responsibility of the Republican Party, therefore, is to ascertain the character of our national policy in all fundamental matters about which there is now public confusion and uncertainty. What, for instance, is the monetary policy of the Government and is it still believed, as President Roosevelt said in 1934, that this involves "complete reorganization and a measured control of the economic structure"? Here alone is ample material for a Congressional investigation. For without a stable currency it is idle to expect a stable economy.

Another mystery of vital importance to every citizen is the actual nature and purpose of our post-war foreign policy. While this is vague in many directions it is especially nebulous in regard to Germany. What were the factors behind the Potsdam Agreement as signed by President Truman? Is it our undisclosed intention to forward the Sovietization of Germany? Why were the ideas of Secretary Morgenthau in this matter allowed to triumph over those of Secretaries Hull and Stimson?

The issue of foreign policy, in particular, will come to the fore with submission to the Senate of the peace treaties which the Administration is now endeavoring to formulate. They cannot be ratified with the same light-hearted, "pass-the-drinks" consideration given to the signing of executive agreements at Yalta and elsewhere. And public understanding of what these treaties imply must go hand in hand with their thorough consideration by the Senate.

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When the Eightieth Congress convenes, only seven weeks hence, its big job will be to open up the record of the past 14 years. The first step in re-establishing popular control of government will be to dissipate the almost complete public ignorance of what has been happening.

For this task the Congressional Committees, under Republican chairmanship and with Republican majorities, are the ideal instrument. Probably some ad hoc committees will be established, especially in highly involved fields. But the regular committees, as cut down in number by the Reorganization Act, should accomplish most of the gigantic task. The best minority, as well as majority, representation will be essential.

While the inquiries should get under way as soon as possible after the new Congress convenes, they must not be vindictive or partisan in spirit. The primary purpose is not to sensationalize wartime waste and petty fraud, for these were practically inevitable under the circumstances. The object is not prosecution but investigation -- to clarify the underlying purposes of the New Deal Administration, so that whatever was good in its program is retained while that which was equivocal is scrapped. Republican procedure must harmonize with President Truman's dignified offer of non-partisan co-operation for the common good.

It must be anticipated that a good deal of this inquiry will necessarily be concerned with Communist infiltration of the Administration. Many of its actions and policies which make no sense from any American viewpoint are undoubtedly clever if directed by Communist agents in the Russian interest. Fortunately, a great deal of material in this field has already been carefully gathered by the FBI and various governmental intelligence groups. The wraps must now be taken off J. Edgar Hoover, who has case histories in his files.

The American people have no control over Russia's iron curtain. But they can roll back the one which has cut Washington off from the rest of the country. In the counter-revolution of November 5 an aroused citizenry did its part in the difficult task of restoring popular government. The mandate to the Republican leadership is both specific and challenging. It must immediately proceed to ascertain what the Administration has been doing during the long years when so few questions were asked, and when no real accounting was ever rendered.

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Not Merely Gossip *A Supplement to* Human Events VOL. III, NO. 46

By Frank C. Hanighen November 13, 1946

We can now reveal that at the Tehran Conference in 1943 it was orally agreed by the Big Three -- Churchill, Roosevelt and Stalin -- that the eastern frontiers of post-war Germany would be those which bounded that country in August 1939. This information comes to us from one of the highest sources in the Government, an official who attended not only the Tehran, but also the Yalta and Potsdam meetings and was present when the Big Three made this and other agreements. Our source further discloses that, at Potsdam, Messrs. Truman and Byrnes reminded Marshal Stalin that the United States intended to hold Stalin to his pledge, despite the fact that his military forces had occupied Eastern Germany. It is believed that both the President and Secretary of State have not abandoned their intention.

Mr. Byrnes, it is thought, looks forward to bringing up this matter in the coming discussions in the Four Power Council (now conferring in New York) on the subject of Germany. It may be one of the weapons which he will employ in what Paul W. Ward of the Baltimore Sun envisages as a "showdown" that may come "before the current month ends"; and he speaks of an "atmosphere of impending crises" and a new bold "take it or leave it" attitude appearing in the American delegation. This latter is in part a result, he says, of increased pressure on Mr. Byrnes by some of his advisers and is not unrelated to the election results of last week.

The American delegation, Ward goes on, is prepared to face the possibility of settling down to a state of "permanent incompatibility between the United States and the U.S.S.R."; with a breakdown of the peace parleys and resultant negotiation of separate treaties. In the latter connection, the source mentioned above states that at the time of Yalta, President Roosevelt was not unprepared eventually to negotiate separate treaties. The President conceded that there was a prospect of such a situation, resulting from Russian intransigence, and he confessed himself ready to take this unilateral course.

Such facts as these have too long and without reason been denied to the American public. In the accompanying HUMAN EVENTS Analysis, Felix Morley calls on the new Republican Congress to bare such important details through the method of committee investigation. Officials who attended the secret meetings of the Big Three at these conferences should be summoned to testify, and there is good reason to believe that they would do so, frankly and thoroughly. It is a better way of informing the electorate than through the scarcely impartial, although lucrative, journalistic exposés of a conference camp follower.

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Senator Fulbright of Arkansas deserves credit for starting a nation-wide discussion about one of the great weaknesses of our system of Government. But, as a matter of fact, the Senator has received far more praise than he has merited. In the comments on the subject, we have seen no mention of one insuperable obstacle which consigns the whole matter to the realm of the idlest theorizing. Under the workings of our party system, such a proposal stood about as much chance of acceptance as a proposal for the Democratic Party to merge with the Republican Party.

That is no exaggeration. If President Truman had taken Fulbright's advice, he would thereby have brought about the dismissal of the powerful army of deserving, and very consciously deserving, Democratic holders of Federal jobs. A Republican successor would hardly have spared these mortal enemies of the GOP. A complete change of patronage would have inevitably resulted, with anguished cries from

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innumerable postmasters, postmistresses, small town marshals, etc., etc. The move would probably have dealt a mortal blow to the Democratic Party.

It is always necessary to repeat these "facts of life," for the benefit of those who do not understand how political machines run. This army of officeholders -- together with their sisters and cousins and aunts -- is numerically small as compared with the total votes in general elections. But it is of the utmost importance in primary elections, which it almost invariably swings; and it constitutes no mean factor in general elections. If the distinguished lawgiver from Arkansas was aware of the "low level" political implications of his proposal, he deserves a badge of courage far outranking his Oxford degree. If he overlooked this aspect, he will be reminded of it by Arkansas Democrats. On the morrow of his announcement, a Southern reporter was heard to say, "Fulbright's signed his political death warrant in Arkansas." The remark serves to emphasize the possible penalties for indulging in an altruism which has no roots in political realities.

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The international results of the increased Communist strength shown in Sunday's general election in France are the subject of intense speculation in diplomatic circles. If the augmented Communist power is translated into a shift in French foreign policy towards collaboration with Moscow, various repercussions may be expected. Britain, it is anticipated, will throw more of her weight on the side of Germany. And the United States might well try to do the same. Both London and Washington have long been dubious about the permanence and importance of French support in view of the uncertain social and economic conditions of that country, and of the power of the Communist Party in its politics. If those capitals have to discount France entirely as a supporting factor in their policy on the Continent, then the logical consequence would seem to be a more determined implementation of the kind of policy stated by Byrnes at Stuttgart.

Such a pattern has been evident for some time in the reactions of the Low Countries to the French, German and Russian situations. Belgium now fears Germany much less than a Communist-influenced France; and it is noticeable that Belgium asks for virtually no German territory. While Holland is not so generously inclined as to territory, the Dutch Government is clearly disposed to play ball with a reorganized and democratic Germany and is fearful of Soviet influence in Europe.

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Organized labor can draw no optimistic conclusions from a post-election analysis which is now going the rounds in Washington, and which lists: (1) how House members voted on the motion to override President Truman's veto of the Case bill (opposed by organized labor); and (2) how these members fared in the elections.

The record shows that 263 members voted to override. Of these, 18 were not candidates for renomination, leaving 245 who entered primaries and/or general election. Seventeen were defeated in the primaries and five in the general election; while 223 were re-elected. Thus 91 per cent of the 245 campaigners marked as "anti-labor" for their stand on the Case bill veto survived labor disapproval.

The "friends of labor" fell far short of such success. One hundred and thirty-nine members voted to sustain the veto. Of these, 11 did not choose to run, leaving 128 who entered primaries and general election. Four were defeated in the primaries and 41 (all Democrats) in the general election, while 83 were re-elected. In short, only 65 per cent of those campaigners who earned the approval of organized labor were successful at the polls. The inference drawn from these percentage figures is that fewer members in the next Congress will be inclined to fear retaliation from organized labor for their votes on labor legislation.

Yet that consideration alone may not prove decisive. The attitude of both employers and unions towards such legislation may create an atmosphere, one way or

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the other, of no little influence on the course of such legislation. While many friends of labor would like to see some reforms enacted in this field, they would oppose complete repeal or nullification of the Wagner Act. It is reassuring, therefore, to note that one prominent, conservative employer, Mr. Ernest T. Weir, of the National Steel Corporation, has come forward and stated (New York Times, November 10) that he has never favored repeal, but merely amendment of this important and controversial law.

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An atom bomb story published in the London Daily Express on November 2 has stirred much interest because it contains statistics on a subject officially surrounded by a hush-hush policy. Under the by-line of the paper's weapons expert, Chapman Pincher, the piece gives some estimates of atom bomb stock piles and production in this country, etc. Pincher believes that the United States has probably 96 atom bombs in its munitions pile. The estimate is based on a presumed output of six bombs per month since the Nagasaki bombing in August 1945. Pincher arrived at his total of 96 by assuming that there were 8 bombs in stock at the time of Nagasaki; by deducting two used at the Bikini experiments; and by assuming that the rate of production of six per month had been maintained.

Many observers in Washington have remained uncertain about the accuracy of the Daily Express figures. General Groves announces that under War Department rules he can neither "confirm nor deny" any of the details of the article. All we can say is that a nationally known scientist, familiar with atom work, confidentially informs us that his estimates check with those of Mr. Pincher.

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General Clay's attack, November 5, on the denazification ministers of the three states in the American zone was made at Stuttgart, where Secretary Byrnes two months ago had spoken a more hopeful and constructive language. Our foreign policy thus suffers from a zigzag course. General Clay apparently is oblivious of the enormous dislocation which denazification has already caused in the economic and social life of our zone. He also seems to overlook the fact that, as Anne O'Hare McCormick reported from Stuttgart (New York Times, November 6), "the strongest opposition the writer has heard to the character and methods of the present process [of denazification] comes from proved anti-Nazi men who have spent years in concentration camps, women whose husbands or sons were executed in Hitler's purges." The opposition of these elements to our policy is not based on misplaced sympathy for real Nazis, but on the sweeping definition given to the term Nazi in our Military Government denazification code. These orders, this column pointed out as long ago as December 12, 1945, covered millions of Germans who could not in fairness be called Nazis; and they were reportedly written under the influence of American fellow travellers, amounting in fact to a subtle form of class warfare.

There was some hope that, after denazification had been turned over to trusted anti-Nazi Germans, these purges would be held within more manageable proportions and carried on in a saner spirit. It is, therefore, difficult to see what prompted General Clay to raise this issue again. The reason may be found in a report this column recently received from American sources in Berlin. "Clay is quite aware of the unsoundness of our German policy and of the danger of its results. But, not having visited the United States for over a year, he does not seem to grasp the change in American feeling which has occurred towards both Germany and Russia in the meantime. He still talks as if he can do nothing inasmuch as PM sets our German policy." General Clay, just arrived on a visit to his native land, might well study the election results of November 5, the day, incidentally, when he made his denazification attack.

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Notes and Quotes

It is regrettable to learn that J. Middleton Murry has retired as Editor of the London Peace News. One of his last editorials (October 11), from which we quote, displays his extraordinary gift for commenting on the depressing conditions of Europe today, not only with vivid insight but also charity and hope:

"This is, indeed, a cigarette-civilization quite as much as it is a machine-civilization; for the cigarette is the narcotic drug that makes the machine-civilization tolerable. The cigarette has two chief properties. It calms the nerves, as we say: insulates the smoker to some degree from the irritating pressure of the outside world, gives him a mild whiff of oblivion. The craving for that relative oblivion the German shares with all the other denizens of the machine-civilization. It is a stronger craving, because he has more need to forget. But the cigarette, also, in deadening physical sensation, allays the cravings of the empty belly.

"These two things together give the cigarette its preposterous value in Germany. Cigarettes will buy anything -- literally anything. They are the absolute to which all other values are relative.

"It seems to be Germany's destiny to live out to the fantastic extremity the spiritual potentialities of our modern civilization. The cigarette currency symbolizes the fearful combination of reality and unreality which is the German existence today. When the real becomes incredible -- and it is that for all of us when we dare to think -- *the incredible may become real: even Faith, and even Peace.*"

There may, indeed, be Faith in Germany judging by the attitude described in the following paragraph from Tidings (London, October 19): "At Bremen recently several German politicians who hold office under British or American authority met to arrange a new, German trial of the three men acquitted at Nuremberg. A Herr Tantzen, however, who is Premier of Oldenburg, raised an argument which sounds like a voice from the grave in these days. He opposed the continuance in Germany of anything resembling the 'people's courts' which the Nazis copied from the Communists (and which the Communists have continued in the Soviet-controlled area of Europe). Herr Tantzen wanted courts, presided over by impartial judges administering the law, not political tribunals set up to stage spectacular demonstrations of 'the people's will.'"

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A letter from Buenos Aires presents a picture of conditions under Perón which should enable Americans to understand better the plight of our Argentine friends: "The situation is so tense in this country, and there is so little to be done about our Gargantuan prosperity and our immature political escapade, that many of us feel that it is better to leave the country. . . . The commonest impression an American would get of present-day Argentina is that we are in the midst of a social process comparable to the Reconstruction crisis in the United States: we have our own scalawags and carpetbaggers; we have our do-nothings and the ubiquitous middle class . . . . Meanwhile, the banner of the proletariat is raised against the bourgeoisie; the bourgeoisie itself has become revolutionary; and liberalism is labelled reactionary. So those of us who believed in freedom of thought are slowly becoming the members of a despised group; we are becoming 'conservative.' This is the result of the challenge made to our social order by the unskilled laborers, the representatives of a growing industrial era, the politicians and the opportunists who seek political positions under the spoils system."

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Death and Resurrection Department ---- The biography of Franklin D. Roosevelt in Who's Who in America (1946-47, page 2019) contains the following misprint: "Died April 12, 1945; interned at Hyde Park, N. Y."

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